



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 149

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2003

No. 89

House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 519. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of the San Gabriel River Watershed, and for other purposes.

H.R. 788. An act to revise the boundary of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in the States of Utah and Arizona.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 733. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire the McLoughlin House National Historic Site in Oregon City, Oregon, and to administer the site as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 246. An act to provide that certain Bureau of Land Management land shall be held in trust for the Pueblo of Santa Clara and the Pueblo of San Ildefonso in the State of New Mexico.

S. 500. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to study certain sites in the historic district of Beaufort, South Carolina, relating to the Reconstruction Era.

S. 520. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain facilities to the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District in the State of Idaho.

S. 625. An act to authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct certain feasibility studies in the Tualatin River Basin in Oregon, and for other purposes.

S. 635. An act to amend the National Trails System Act to require the Secretary of the Interior to update the feasibility and suitability studies of four national historic trails, and for other purposes.

S. 1015. An act to authorize grants through the Centers for Disease Control and Preven-

tion for mosquito control programs to prevent mosquito-borne diseases, and for other purposes.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

ROADLESS RULE ROLLBACK

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, people who care about the environment were heartened 2 weeks ago when the administration declared that it would uphold the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. But alas, the other shoe dropped.

Last week, the administration proposed exempting Alaska's national forests from the roadless rule, reopening them to logging and roadbuilding. Even more troubling, the administration will also turn over significant authority over our Federal forests to the States, allowing governors to provide for exemptions.

Allowing States to exempt themselves from our national environmental laws is not a healthy precedent. States have a mixed record when it comes to environmental stewardship. They are too often overwhelmed by understandable local interest from snowmobiles to timber to water. We need a strong presence. These are, after all, our national forests.

Rather than the administration's vigorous enforcement of environmental

laws, this is another example of a settlement to further erode, rather than strengthen and uphold. There are about 50 pending timber sales in roadless areas in Alaska currently protected under the roadless rule that are ready to go forward when the Tongass exemption is finalized.

Despite the assurances that 95 percent of the Alaska's forests will be protected, the remaining 5 percent allows hundreds of thousands of acres which are among the most valuable for both the timber companies and the environment. This roadless conservation rule was developed during the last 3 years of the Clinton administration. It was finalized after the most extensive public outreach process in history. Six hundred public hearings and more than 1.6 million official comments overwhelmingly in support of this initiative.

The rule protects 58½ million acres of pristine national forests in 39 States. In my State alone, in Oregon, 2 million acres would have been protected.

The independent editorial boards around the country have zeroed in. In The New York Times, it pointed out that this is part of a continued assault on environmental protections. From day one, the Bush administration has sought to unravel the intricate tapestry of rules and regulations that have shielded the national forests from excessive logging and other commercial activities.

In the last 6 months alone, the administration has finalized or proposed new rules that would short-circuit environmental reviews, restrict public participation in land-use decisions, and weaken safeguards for endangered species.

The administration's latest target is the roadless rule. The San Francisco Chronicle pointed out the administration's pattern of disingenuousness. The Bush administration's doublespeak about the environment reached a new level of shamelessness this week when

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

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it announced it was retaining the roadless rule and then an announcement that it would prohibit logging on 95 percent of Alaska's national forest. Let none be fooled. What the Bush administration did was carve out huge exceptions and loopholes through a thoroughly vetted and well-balanced, popularly-supported plan to protect the ever shrinking swath of untrampled national forests.

In the Boston Globe last week, National forests are called that because they belong to the Nation as a whole, not the governors, and certainly not to the administration in Washington, who has put a former timber lobbyist in charge of them.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune, the administration's version of the roadless rule for the National forests to be published later this month, is portrayed by its authors as a fine tuning of what was arguably the Clinton administration's most important wilderness initiative. Right. It strains credibility for Clinton's successors having relentlessly assailed the rule, to claim that they are now prepared to accept it with minor modifications. Indeed, there is nothing minor about the modifications the Interior Department outlined. Fine tuning with such changes is akin to edging a lawn with a chain saw. Edging a lawn with a chain saw. Not fine tuning.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and their forests deserve better.

REAL RESULTS FOR WORKING FAMILIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 1 minute.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, the American people are responding to the Republican party's economic agenda and we are responding to their needs. Our majority were elected in part to get the economy moving again, and the early evidence suggests we are delivering results for working families.

On March 11, when the Committee on Ways and Means held its first hearing on the President's Job and Growth Package, the Standard and Poor's 500 Index stood at just above 800. Yesterday it closed above 1,000, a 25 percent increase in the stock market in just 3 months.

The long suffering NASDAQ Composite Index has risen almost 10 percent just since the President signed the Jobs and Growth Package a few weeks ago. All totalled, \$1.9 trillion in equity value has been created by the American people in fewer than 100 days. That is college savings, pension funds and individual retirement accounts. That kind of wealth creation leads to more investment, which leads to job creation and, ultimately, leads to economic growths. It may be too soon to call this a bull market, Mr. Speaker, but it is starting to move.

And in the face of this positive response from the American people, we are going to keep moving our agenda of job creation, growth and economic opportunity to help our citizens fulfill America's promise.

Last week we extended the life of the \$1,000 child tax credit, extending its benefits to millions of working and middle class families. We took millions off the Federal tax rolls all together, and got rid of the child tax credit's marriage penalty.

Our commitment to a family-friendly Tax Code will not stop there, because this week the House will consider legislation to make the 2001 repeal of the death tax permanent. After all, if we have the right to pass on a family business or farm to our spouse and children, why should our children and grandchildren not have that same right? Of course they have should, because economic security does not come with an expiration date.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican agenda for economic growth and opportunity will create new jobs and improve current jobs. That is what the American people expect and it is exactly what we are delivering.

ALASKAN EXEMPTION FROM ROADLESS AREAS CONSERVATION RULE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Bush administration revised the Roadless Area Conservation Rule and exempted millions of acres of forests throughout our country. Included in these revisions are areas I recently had the pleasure of visiting, including the Tongass and the Chugach National Forests in Alaska, which are now set to be turned into the horror of the "10-Year Tongass Timber Project" which I believe is truly a disaster.

As a firsthand witness, I have experienced the beauty and the natural wonders of these two forests in Alaska. The Tongass and Chugach Forests boast the world's most intact rain forests with centuries-old trees providing critical habitat for wolves, grizzly bears, wild salmon, bald eagles, and other wildlife that have disappeared from many other parts of our country.

In 2001, the roadless rule was drafted and implemented to balance the interests of environmental and local labor groups so that a small number of timber projects already in progress at that time could be completed. Furthermore, at the time the maintenance and reconstruction of existing roads was strictly limited to cases of public safety and habitat improvement for wildlife, which meant common sense environmental regulations were put in place to ensure the health and safety of the residences of these areas where

they were tended to as well as the economic well-being of those individuals.

Those common sense regulations did not shut down Alaska. They protected the lands and the people from mining and timber interests that looked to pilage and use the lands for their and not America's own needs. However, until now, large scale timber projects, the cutting sale and removal of timber from the Tongass Forest has been prohibited.

This Roadless Area Conservation Rule was created with the tremendous outpouring of public support, demonstrated in over 600 public hearings that were held around the Nation and with more than 1.6 million comments on this rule alone, more than any other rule in the history of our Nation.

Today, in 2003, without public support or comment, the President has revised the roadless rule with an unbalanced approach that favors the logging and timber interests over America's interests and swings the door wide open for commercial logging, roadbuilding, and development on 58.5 million acres of unroaded national forests nationwide, one quarter of which are located in the Tongass and Chugach National Forests.

This is being done without any public comment, but, again, when has the will of the majority of the American people mattered to this administration?

By lifting the roadless rule in these areas, the Bush administration will destroy the Tongass and Chugach, the Nation's two largest National forests totalling 22 million acres and deprive generations of young Americans from their national inheritance of the world's last remaining old-growth temperate rainforest.

Essentially, these two forests are the Amazon of North America. They are the last vestiges of pristine wildness. They are treasures that require vigilant protection by all Americans. They are the best of what we have in Alaska. And yet, the Forest Service has already scheduled approximately 50 timber projects in the roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest and is set to sell Tongass timber as soon as these revisions are finalized.

To make the situation worse, according to the GAO, these timber sales have been subsidized with hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. I believe that maintaining the roadless rule will protect not only these forests in Alaska, but also Federal lands and forests in every State in our union.

As a New Yorker, I fear that the slippery slope will soon lead to logging and road construction in the forests of New York State, including the wooded areas surrounding the Finger Lakes region.

By opening the road to timber and logging, the President is sending a message that every protected wildness and forest in America is vulnerable to attack by profit-hungry interest groups. From Alaska to New York, this effort must be blocked.